

CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS
May 22, 2002

Announcements

Review of April 24 meeting notes

Any comments are to be sent to Tracy Pettit.

Welcome

John Burke is located in the Central Valley Operations office.

Handouts

1. May Ops Meeting Delta Smelt and Splittail Update; Ryan Olah, USFWS.
2. CALFED OPS GROUP Operations Briefing, dated May 22, 2002; Curtis Creel, DWR.

SWRCB Activities

Update on SWRCB activities

- Four new Board members have been appointed: Arthur G. Baggett, Jr., Peter S. Silva, Richard Katz and Gary Carlton. Gary Carlton was appointed by the Governor to fill the position of civil engineer on the SWRCB. Mr. Carlton most recently served as the Executive Officer for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and is the former President and CEO of McLaren-Hart Inc., an environmental engineering company that provides services domestically and abroad. Mr. Carlton earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California, Davis, and a Master of Science degree from California State University, Sacramento.
- The hearing relating to the water right applications filed by the cities of Fairfield, Vacaville and Benicia has been postponed for ninety days to allow the parties time to negotiate a contract that takes into account the Area of Origin Statutes. If agreement is not reached on the provisions of a contract, the hearing will commence in October.
- The SWRCB considered on May 16 a draft order that denies the South Delta Water Agency's petition for reconsideration of the Executive Director's approval of the Water Level Response Plan for Joint Point of Diversion. In consideration of SDWA's comments, the SWRCB deferred further consideration until May 28, 2002. Comments on the proposed draft order are due to the SWRCB by May 22, 2002.
- The SWRCB anticipates implementing Term 91 diversion curtailments in early June. Ordinarily, the curtailment period has ended August 31 in the years when curtailments are imposed. However, based on hydrologic conditions that existed during the fall of 2001, a second curtailment period may be imposed during the fall of 2002. The SWRCB will work closely with the Projects to determine the need for a fall curtailment. Term 91 conditions are imposed in real time and affects diversions on the Sacramento River. Water right holders have Fall "Term 91" curtailments. There has been a change in use over the past five years regarding rice decomposition. Last October, due to the rice fields being flooded and not burned, depletions in the Sacramento Valley increased by approximately 40,000 acre-feet. Also, Term 91 is not applicable when the Delta is under excess conditions.

- The Vernalis flow objective was not met during the months of February, March and the first half of April. Meeting the Vernalis flow objective is a requirement of the New Melones water right permit, though the water need not come from that source. Reclamation informed the SWRCB that water monies were not available to meet the objective. However, the SWRCB felt that since water was backed upstream into a CVP reservoir (approximately 22 TAF), and there was no harm to the delta smelt, then Reclamation should dedicate a similar quantity of water to fishery purposes later in the year. The make-up water need not come from New Melones. Reclamation views this as a cost toward the WQCP. In June, if the X2 requirement moves upstream and is located east of Chipps Island, then a lower flow objective of approximately 1,400 cfs would apply. The SWRCB requires an accounting of the water by December 1, 2002. The Vernalis flow objective is a standard that the CVP must meet, while both SWP and the CVP must meet the other standards. The issues associated with the Vernalis flow objective will be revisited in the 2003 Operations Plan.

On-Going Activities Related to the Ops Group

DOI's process for defining (B)(1) and the carrying over of (B)(2)

The preparation of the (B)(2) guidelines/criteria and the banking protocols are being worked on, with the banking protocols possibly ready by the June Ops Group meeting. Reclamation will coordinate with the OFF group. The OFF group is waiting to review the draft banking protocols. Since (B)(2) is expected to expend all of the 800 TAF, water may not be available to be banked this year. Banking will need to be addressed in the 2003 Operations Plan.

Accounting of Replacement Pumping

Reclamation is working on the letter from the Environmental Defense Fund. Reclamation views the loss associated with the replacement pumping as an impact and counts it as a (B)(2) cost. The result of the loss of Bank's pumping in August and September is under D-1485. Banks is not pumping for the CVP under current operations. JPOD is viewed as a CVP allocation augment tool and not a (B)(2) cost. Again, this issue will be revisited during the preparation of the 2003 Operations Plan.

Trinity Decision

The higher flow regime of 469 TAF for the year at Trinity is not considered a (B)(2) cost. However, the power impacts are still being evaluated. There may be an increase in power generation this year; however, if Trinity does not refill, then there could be impacts next year. Trinity has released about 60 TAF through the bypass.

VAMP

Accounting for the cost of VAMP is underway. Augmentation on the upstream tributaries is not occurring anymore. The flows in the Tuolumne and Stanislaus Rivers will be reduced to the base flows. EWA assets will be used to continue the export reduction during the VAMP shouldered. A special DAT call is scheduled for May 29, 2002 to discuss the ramping schedule.

Delta Cross Channel Gate Experiment

The DCC gates experiment is scheduled for June 3 and will last for two weeks. The gates will be operated at nighttime. Keeping the gates closed provides better protection for the salmon coming from the Sacramento River. Reclamation will notify the SWRCB of the DCC gate schedule and that this action follows D1641. However, conditions for a variance can be requested for experimental purposes, but it is delegated to the SWRCB's Executive Director for allowance. The standards for the salinity gates at Suisun Marsh were waived until 2004 for experimental purposes.

The water quality requirements at either Jersey Point or Emmanton may be a concern. If Jersey Point is a problem, then the DCC gates need to be open. If Emmanton is a problem, then either the DCC gates need to be closed or flows in the Sacramento River must be increased. Criteria for water quality have been developed and will be distributed to the people involved in the DCC gate experiment.

Temporary Barriers

A discussion on the temporary barriers followed. The HORB will be breached on May 25 and 26, 2002. The flap gates at Old River near the DMC and Middle River will be tied open on May 26, 2002. The south Delta diverters expressed a difference in opinion about tying open the flap gates at Middle River. They also feel the HORB must be breached prior to tying open the flap gates at Old River. However, it was mentioned that the gates cannot be tied open prior to breach HORB. Concurrence with District 544 must be needed, who in turn, consult with SDWA. The south Delta diverters want a low-level weir at Grant Line Canal because they believe that the flow downstream will be the same and will benefit smelt. The south Delta diverters believe the following about smelt protection at each of the three agricultural barriers: it is speculative when operating the flap gate at Old River; it is beneficial to both the south Delta diverters and smelt if a low-level weir is installed at Grant Line Canal; and it was not beneficial to smelt at Old River. Once the warning level has been reached for smelt, and the HORB is breached, then the flap gates can be tied open at all the agricultural barriers. It was mentioned that DWR would investigate the benefits of having a low-level weir installed at Grant Line Canal. A request was made to bring to the next meeting any regulatory information such as the USACE permits, the Biological Opinion, etc. Particle tracking is not a part of the environmental or permit process.

A presentation by Mark Holderman on temporary barriers will be given at the Ops group meeting in June or July.

Fishery Status

Status of Sacramento River Monitoring

There are low numbers of fish in the Sacramento River. The low number of Fall-run Chinook salmon released from the Coleman Hatchery which have passed by Knights Landing is a

concern. Sampling at Mossdale indicated a decrease in the number of Fall-run Chinook salmon (about 400 on 5/6, and about 15 to 20 on 5/22). The salvage numbers have decreased. High numbers of juvenile Fall-run Chinook salmon (due to late spawners) reside in the rivers, especially the American River.

Steelhead, Winter-Run and Spring-Run Chinook Salmon

The draft OCAP Biological Opinion will be sent to DWR and Reclamation by the end of the week. The position where critical habitat is determined is vacant in Washington. Critical habitat, used for determining jeopardy and looked upon as take (a violation of Section 9), may be redesignated as Rearing, Spawning or Migration Corridor. What has been designated as critical habitat (based upon temperature and flow) still remains in the Biological Opinion. Also, the discussion or analysis of critical habitat remains in the biological opinion. Critical habitat may not be declared for steelhead and Spring-run Chinook in the Central Valley, even though they are considered endangered species. There is no legal significance for critical habitat. Jeopardy cannot be declared if critical habitat is taken, only when the take limit has been reached. Riparian habitat is considered critical habitat.

Splittail

The salvage numbers are low at both facilities.

Delta Smelt

The smelt distribution indicates the smelt are moving west. The re-consultation level for smelt will not be reached for May. Survey No. 6 (which is the 20-mm survey) starts next week. The preliminary numbers will be ready by next Wednesday's DAT call.

Work Group Activities

OFF Update

A combination OFF/DAT call was scheduled on May 21, 2002. The OFF participants will join the DAT call scheduled on May 29, 2002. A draft letter will be sent to the CALFED Ops Group as a follow-up regarding (B)(2) banking.

DAT Update

The following three recommendations were given at the DAT call scheduled May 21, 2002: (1) breach the HORB, (2) tie open the flap gates at Old River and Middle River, and (3) schedule the DCC gate experiment for June 3.

Operations Status

CVP/SWP Operations Status

Excess conditions in the Delta continue. The combined export for both facilities is 1,500 cfs, with CVP scheduled at 850 cfs and the SWP at 700 cfs. River releases are being reduced due to the storm. The Vernalis flow objective is being met. If there are no fish problems in June, then both the CVP and SWP can increase their pumping. The EWA is responsible for costs above the WQCP base case. June's combined exports are projected to be 6,000 cfs. The CVP's (B)(2) export baseline for June is 3,000 cfs based upon D-1485. A discussion on base case scenarios and (B)(2) and EWA costs followed.

Delta Operations Criteria

The water year type is classified as a dry year. There are two ways to meeting the Chipps Island requirement: water quality or outflow. By May 15, 2002, since the daily water quality standard could not be met, an increase in flows was necessary. However, due to the precipitation, the CVP and SWP met the requirements for Chipps Island for May and June without maintaining higher releases for too long. The agricultural standards are in effect until June 15.

Action Items

- A presentation on temporary barriers will be given at the Ops Group meeting in June or July.